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*On the Use of Oil of Tobacco in the Cure of Cancers ; in a letter
from Rev. ZEPHANIAH WILLIS, of Kingston, to Rev. JO-
SEPH WILLARD, D.D. L.L.D. F.A.A.*

Kingston, January 13th, 1786.

REV. SIR,

AS every discovery tending to the cure of cancers may be of importance, especially to those who have the misfortune to be visited with this dreadful disease, the following cure may possibly be deemed worthy of notice.

Jonathan Holmes, of this town, is aged 77, descended from a family which has been remarkably subject to cancers. About 25 years since, an eruption appeared near the outer corner of his left eye, which continued to increase till it appeared to be a confirmed cancer. He made application to a French surgeon then in the country, who professed skill in such cases, and had it taken out ; and after submitting to a long and severe course of physic, appeared to have obtained a perfect cure.

About five years since, a similar eruption appeared under his right eye ; it continued to increase slowly, attended with the usual symptoms of a cancer, for about four years. During this period, he applied to a surgeon to have it extracted ; but being near the eye, he refused to operate, lest it should destroy his eye and hasten his dissolution. • After this, it increased very fast, discharging a virulent humour, and having consider-

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ably large excrescences, denoting it to be a cancer of the rose kind.

That fondness for life which is natural to all, and the dread of falling a sacrifice by this most terrible of all executioners, together with some hints received upon the subject, prompted him to try the following experiment. Being himself a smoker of tobacco, he practiced filling his pipe with strong tobacco and smoking it part out, applied a thin linen rag over the top of the bowl, and putting it to his mouth, blew the smoke through the stem ; by which a small quantity of oil was expelled with the smoke. By repeatedly blowing, a considerable number of drops of this oil were easily collected, which he applied to the cancer, both with his finger and by wetting lint with it and laying it on. This oil being of a very pungent nature, caused a very strong sensation. But a very few applications produced an evident alteration for the better. He continued the application morning and evening, and at other convenient seasons, attended with similar effects, for six weeks or two months ; at the expiration of which, the cancer was entirely healed, with a very little scar remaining.

In the first experiment which he made to extract the oil, which was with a new pipe, he found that the oil was almost wholly absorbed by the stem. To prevent this, breaking off the stem, he joined a wooden one, perforated in the same manner : this he found did not absorb the oil, and that with a very little trouble a sufficient quantity was obtained.

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Whether this simple case be worth communicating, is humbly submitted by your

most obedient,

respectful servant,

ZEPHANIAH WILLIS.

The Rev. Joseph Willard, D.D.

APPENDIX.